

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON  
AT SEATTLE

T.S.,

Plaintiff,

v.

BODY CONTOUR CENTERS, LLC d/b/a  
SONO BELLO,

Defendant.

CASE NO. 2:24-cv-01944-LK

ORDER GRANTING MOTION TO  
PROCEED UNDER PSEUDONYM

This matter comes before the Court on Plaintiff’s Motion to Proceed Under Pseudonym. Dkt. No. 28. Plaintiff seeks to proceed under the pseudonym “T.S.” *Id.* at 2. Defendant Body Contour Centers, LLC d/b/a Sono Bello does not oppose her use of a pseudonym at this stage of the proceedings. *Id.* For the reasons stated below, the Court grants Plaintiff’s motion.

**I. BACKGROUND**

Plaintiff initiated this putative class action in November 2024, seeking recovery under a variety of state and federal privacy and medical confidentiality laws on behalf of “all California residents who have accessed and used [Sono Bello’s] Website to book a consultation.” Dkt. No. 1

1 and 2–3. Defendant Sono Bello filed a motion to dismiss on January 31, 2025. Dkt. Nos. 17, 18,  
2 19. Sono Bello further filed a motion to stay discovery in early April, Dkt. No. 23, which the Court  
3 has since denied, Dkt. No. 26.

## 4 II. DISCUSSION

### 5 A. Legal Standard

6 Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 10 requires that every complaint list the names of all  
7 parties. Fed. R. Civ. P. 10(a). Thus, “[t]he normal presumption in litigation is that parties must use  
8 their real names.” *Doe v. Kamehameha Schs./Bernice Pauahi Bishop Est.*, 596 F.3d 1036, 1042  
9 (9th Cir. 2010). However, “a party may preserve his or her anonymity in judicial proceedings in  
10 special circumstances when the party’s need for anonymity outweighs prejudice to the opposing  
11 party and the public’s interest in knowing the party’s identity,” including where “nondisclosure of  
12 the party’s identity is necessary to protect a person from harassment, injury, ridicule or personal  
13 embarrassment.” *Does I thru XXIII v. Advanced Textile Corp.*, 214 F.3d 1058, 1067–68 (9th Cir.  
14 2000) (citation modified). Courts generally allow a party to proceed anonymously in three  
15 circumstances: “(1) when identification creates a risk of retaliatory physical or mental harm; (2)  
16 when anonymity is necessary to preserve privacy in a matter of sensitive and highly personal  
17 nature; and (3) when the anonymous party is compelled to admit his or her intention to engage in  
18 illegal conduct, thereby risking criminal prosecution.” *Id.* at 1068 (citation modified).

### 19 B. Discussion

20 Plaintiff argues that “[p]seudonymity is necessary to protect [her] privacy interests in her  
21 personal and intimate medical information, including her search for a weight loss surgical  
22 procedure.” Dkt. No. 28 at 3. While “Plaintiff is currently in a position to decide to whom she  
23 discloses her health conditions and the treatment she seeks,” requiring her to proceed “under her  
24 full name will strip her of that . . . control” and no longer protect her from the possibility of

1 “harassment, embarrassment and ridicule.” *Id.* Further, forcing her to litigate using her true name  
2 “will cause the very injury that the litigation addresses – the public disclosure of highly sensitive,  
3 private personal information, especially health conditions and treatment thereof.” *Id.* at 4.

4 Plaintiff also argues that proceeding pseudonymously would not “interfere with the  
5 public’s interest in this action or . . . right to an open court system,” since her individual identity  
6 is “not central to the issues raised” in her complaint. *Id.* (quoting *Doe 1 v. Github, Inc.*, 672 F.  
7 Supp. 3d 837, 854 (N.D. Cal. 2023)). She notes that her own identity “has no bearing on the  
8 resolution of the issues raised by this case, i.e., whether Defendant’s alleged use of tracking  
9 technologies and interception of users’ personal communications unlawfully led to the disclosure  
10 of consumers’ PII or PHI to unauthorized third parties,” and that the nature of this case as a class  
11 action militates against requiring her to disclose her name. *Id.* (“because this is a putative class  
12 action, most, if not all, of the class members’ identities will never be public”).

13 Although Sono Bello’s non-opposition to the motion to proceed anonymously “may weigh  
14 in favor of anonymity because there is no argument of fundamental unfairness to [it],” that is  
15 ultimately not dispositive given the public interest at stake. *L.R. v. Cigna Health & Life Ins. Co.*,  
16 No. 6:22-CV-1819-RBD-DCI, 2023 WL 4532672, at \*4 (M.D. Fla. July 13, 2023). Courts have  
17 been reluctant to permit parties to litigate matters concerning protected medical information  
18 anonymously. For example, in *Doe v. UNUM Life Insurance Company of America*, the district  
19 court determined that “potential [for] embarrassment or increased anxiety brought on by litigation  
20 d[id] not justify anonymity” in an appeal from a denial of disability benefits for serious mental and  
21 physical health issues. 164 F. Supp. 3d 1140, 1145 (N.D. Cal. 2016). “The most compelling  
22 situations [in which plaintiffs are allowed to proceed anonymously] involve matters which are  
23 highly sensitive, such as social stigmatization, real danger of physical harm, or where the injury  
24 litigated against would occur as a result of the disclosure of the plaintiff’s identity.” *Id.* (quoting

*Doe v. Rostker*, 89 F.R.D. 158, 162 (N.D. Cal. 1981)). This case falls into the latter category. As the court explained in *In re Meta Pixel Healthcare Litigation*,

The central issues in this case are whether Meta improperly secured plaintiffs' private health care information. . . . Requiring plaintiffs to proceed using their actual names—when their health care entities have already been disclosed and when their private health care information will be publicly discussed—will arguably cause a further and greater privacy intrusion. . . . The information plaintiffs provided to their medical providers that was improperly captured or used by Meta is at the very heart of this case . . . [and] will be discussed in open court when the parties argue about the strength of plaintiffs' claims, as necessary to allow the public to understand my rulings and possibly a jury's ultimate determination. But it is unnecessary to publicly link that information with an individual at this stage in the case.

No. 22-CV-03580-WHO, 2025 WL 807954, at \*1–2 (N.D. Cal. Mar. 12, 2025). The court further noted that “[r]equiring plaintiffs who seek to vindicate their privacy rights to publicly link their names to the [very] information they seek to protect . . . is against the public interest, as it could dissuade plaintiffs from bringing privacy cases.” *Id.* at \*2.

For the same reasons, the Court finds that pseudonymity is appropriate here—at least at this stage of the case—and outweighs the countervailing considerations. The Court may revisit the issue at a later stage of the proceedings if Defendant so moves. *See G.M.T. v. Mayorkas*, No. C24-0344-JLR, 2024 WL 1859857, at \*2 (W.D. Wash. Apr. 29, 2024).

### III. CONCLUSION

For the reasons set forth above, Plaintiff’s motion, Dkt. No. 28, is GRANTED. The parties shall refer to Plaintiff by the pseudonym “T.S.” in all future filings and public proceedings in this matter.

Dated this 7th day of July, 2025.

Lauren King

Lauren King  
United States District Judge